INTERIM REPORT
Subcommittee No. IV
How Much Agricultural Land Should Be Preserved in Maryland

The subcommittee discussed the programs of New York and New Jersey with regard to the quality and quantity of agricultural land to be preserved. While the New York system involves no specific acreage goal, the New Jersey plan proposes to establish a preservation goal of one million acres of agricultural land.

The subcommittee felt that an acreage goal would be desirable at least as a basis for discussion and future planning. Currently there are about 2.7 million acres in farms in the State. As a tentative first approximation, the subcommittee decided to establish 2.5 million acres of farmland as the preservation goal in Maryland. At the current rate of land use conversion (ca. 30,000 acres per year), this goal will provide several years of lead time for implementation, if adopted.

The subcommittee then considered whether a specific goal should be established for each county. This question was deferred until further analysis of land use data could be made.

As to the kinds of land to be preserved and the minimum size, the subcommittee addressed itself to the following questions:

1. Should all active agricultural land be preserved?
2. Should only the high quality agricultural land be preserved?
3. Should Classes I and II lands or Classes I-III lands now in farms be preserved?
4. How should the special or unique agricultural lands be treated?

In order to answer these questions, the subcommittee opted to review the data sources available and the resources necessary to locate the agricultural lands, determine minimum standards for qualifying as agricultural

land, and to assess the quality of Maryland's land and its uses. The subcommittee requested the assistance of the State Department of Planning and the Soil Conservation Service for evaluating the State's land resources and their uses. With the aid of the Natural Soil Group Maps (prepared by the SCS for the State Department of Planning) and the Planning Department's 1973 land use inventory for Maryland, the subcommittee was informed that these two data sources could be over-laid early next year to provide an up-to-date statewide (and county by county) land use map showing the soil resources simultaneously. A pilot study of Caroline and Howard Counties was initiated to show the capabilities of this system.

The subcommittee then looked at the question of preserving all land currently in farms or whether to establish a definition to include only those lands qualifying in specific classes.

The argument for including all land currently in farms was as follows:

1. This concept would provide contiguous land units.

2. This concept would include most of the prime lands in the State. The data in Table 1 indicate that, as of 1967, Maryland crop and pasture land accounted for:

   80% of all inventoried Class I land
   64% of all inventoried Class II land
   40% of all inventoried Class III land
   43% of all inventoried Class IV land
   17% of all inventoried Class V-VIII land

   Additional farmland is also included in the "forest" and "other" land use catagories (see Table 1). However, most of these lands would fall into the Classes above III (i.e., III-VIII).

3. This concept would encompass special or unique lands used for orchards, tobacco, pasture, etc.

Looking at a more refined definition of "prime land" (e.g. Classes I and II only) would have the advantage of preserving the best general farming lands in the State. But this concept would necessitate a broader definition to

include the special or unique lands (e.g. steep, productive orchards) which would not qualify for Classes I or II.

The Natural Soil Groupings would provide another basis for delineating "prime agricultural land" since these groupings cut across Capability Classes and delineate those land areas with similar soil properties (e.g. drainage, depth, permeability, flooding, slope, stoniness and rockiness) which are conducive to crop production. The subcommittee will consider the merits of using these Natural Soil Groups as a criterion for preserving agricultural land once the land use data have been superimposed on these maps.

Therefore, the final decision by the subcommittee on the definition of agricultural land is still pending, although the initial consensus is steering toward the acceptance of "all land currently classed as farmland."

SUMMARY

To date, the subcommittee has:

1. tentatively adopted the figure of 2.5 million acres of farmland as the agricultural land preservation objective.
2. tentatively adopted the concept of "presently used farmland" as the basis for identifying the lands to be preserved.
3. sought additional resource data to identify the State's lands by use categories as well as soil quality for possibly altering and refining the concept of "prime agricultural land" and/or farmland to be preserved.

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Table 1. Land use in Maryland as of 1967 by Capability Class and Subclass (The Maryland Soil and Water Conservation Needs Inventory, 1971. Maryland State Conservation Needs Committee)

Capability (Degree of Hazard) Class	(Type of hazard) Subclass	Cropland	Pasture	Forest	Other	Total
I		139,832	9,693	24,925	12,772	187,222
II	erosion	730,512	113,229	335,563	111,488	1,290,792
	wetness	185,103	36,927	94,125	23,828	339,983
	soil limitation	59,302	1,846	45,935	15,720	122,803
	II total	974,917	152,002	475,623	151,036	1,753,578
III	e	219,897	84,039	215,265	47,417	566,618
	w	236,297	32,262	551,758	38,582	858,899
	s	21,478	436	33,706	6,270	61,890
	III total	477,672	116,737	800,729	92,269	1,487,407
IV	e	161,487	57,670	204,676	32,926	456,759
	w	15,401	10,249	60,976	4,556	91,182
	s	22,623	1,884	45,951	8,978	79,436
	IV total	199,511	69,803	311,603	46,460	627,377
V-VIII	e	97,970	70,287	403,854	27,387	599,498
	w	18,342	16,833	199,741	153,479	388,395
	s	40,136	22,081	489,698	54,008	605,923
	V-VIII total	156,448	109,201	1,093,293	234,874	1,593,816
Inventory total		1,948,380	457,436	2,706,173	537,411	5,649,400
Non-inventory total						669,565
Total Land Area						6,318,965